

# PEOPLE & THINGS By ATTICUS

HERE is a strange story from life that has become suddenly topical. Out in the Canadian West was a family named Vickers with eight children and very little money. Among their friends were Mr. John Diefenbaker and his wife, who had no children. The kindly Diefenbakers offered to adopt young Jon Vickers and one of the other children but the parents would not part with them. Nevertheless, the Diefenbakers always maintained an affectionate and helpful attitude, especially to the fair-haired Jon, who had a beautiful singing voice despite lack of training.

Now let us come to last Tuesday in London. News had been flashed that the long reign of the Liberals in Canada had come to an end. John Diefenbaker, as Leader of the Progressive Conservatives, had triumphed even though he would need the assistance of the Social Credit group.

## Double Triumph

THAT same night I went to Covent Garden to see and hear the Berlioz opera "The Trojans." The broad-chested, fair-haired tenor Jon Vickers was obviously a favourite with the great audience. At half-time Covent Garden's impresario-in-chief, David Webster, assured me that in five years, Vickers will be the best operatic tenor in the world. This prophecy may be true—we all hope so—but the question is whether Mr. Vickers can attain the full rich quality on his B flat that he has on his medium notes.

Tenors and sopranos must soar to conquer.

I was rather startled on meeting Jon Vickers behind stage when he said: "Isn't it terrific?" Even allowing for the artistic temperament this seemed a trifle self-adulatory. But he hurriedly explained that he was referring to the victory of John Diefenbaker, the man who wanted him for his adopted son.

## Shakespeare's Bailiff

LET us give praise to Shakespeare's Bailiff—Donald Wolfit—who will soon be dubbed Sir Donald by Her Majesty. When the Lord Chamberlain announces his name Mr. Wolfit will stride forward with the dignity of an Emperor and the humility of the artist. And when he kneels before the Queen and she touches each

shoulder with her sword he will arise, step back, bow and then make his exit not as a Caesar but as a humble actor who has been pleased to serve his master Will Shakespeare and his Queen.

Donald Wolfit would act in the village square if there were no theatres. He would act in the rain if there were no more of an audience than four men and a dog. He will bring dignity to knighthood.

## To be a British Man

I RECENTLY mentioned the discussion as to whether May 24 should be named Commonwealth Day instead of Empire Day. Fierce was the avalanche of correspondence that fell upon me, and there was no suggestion of compromise. On the whole the Empire Day just won. I award an imaginary medal for this delightful letter:

Dear Atticus—Of course we must get rid of all such outmoded expressions as "Empire"! Writing—I hope—King's British in a strictly logical mood. I give this opinion while wondering about the outcome of the Britain v. West Indies match. Yours faithfully,  
J. S. Smith.  
A Briton (Ex-English).

## Garibaldi's Flag

A PLEASING incident occurred not long ago when certain peregrinating politicians met some of their Italian opposites at a dinner at the British Embassy in Rome.

In 1870 Garibaldi presented his flag to Captain John Whitehead Peard, who became known as "Garibaldi's Englishman." Captain Peard was one of the "gallant thousand" who followed the great Italian patriot in the campaign for Sicily and Naples. In a critical action by impersonating Garibaldi he caused much confusion to the enemy.

Eventually the famous flag came into the hands of the family whose head is now Sir Jocelyn Lucas, Bt., M.P. With an imagination and courtesy which are wholly admirable Sir Jocelyn presented the flag to the British Embassy in Rome.

## A Christian's Task

THE other day I had a visit from a priest who will shortly leave this country to take on a task that will present many problems. The Right Reverend Joost de Blank, Bishop of Stepney, is going out

to South Africa next autumn to be Archbishop of Capetown.

His background is interesting. He was born in Rotterdam 49 years ago and moved to England with his parents at the tender age of one year. He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and Queens' College, Cambridge, and was confirmed in the Church of England in 1929. He gained much human experience in the democracy of his own family circle, which consisted of three boys and three girls. One of his sisters is secretary to the Magistrates' Association and secretary of Holloway Visitors.

Bishop Joost de Blank does not blind himself to the difficulties that will surround his new appointment. The equality of God's Kingdom on earth is the very basis of the Christian Faith and his task will require patience, courage, tolerance and faith. But his knowledge of humanity is real and broad; for



Rt. Rev. Bishop J. de Blank.

he joined the Army as a chaplain in 1940 and did five years' service, including the decisive fighting of the Eighth Army in the Western Desert. Later in Northern Europe he was seriously wounded by a V2.

Bishop Joost de Blank is a quiet-spoken man, but one feels that there is tenacity and faith behind those dark, appraising eyes.

## Helpmeet

WHO is the perfect wife? I would place the Duchess of Bedford high upon the list. Among many thousands of us she watched her husband take a television programme in which the panel were out for a bit of fun on the Duke's activities in making a show place of his country house at Woburn. But it was the Duke who scored, making the panel look like a collection of punch-drunk boxers.

By chance I sat next to the Duchess at the Antigone Luncheon and she praised her husband to the skies. She had watched throughout the television duel and gave the verdict to the Duke without bothering to consult the judges. A perfect wife indeed.

## Mayflower Memorials

SEVEN weeks ago Captain Michael Farr made the God-speed message at the Mayflower farewell dinner at Plymouth, England. On Friday he greeted the ship on her arrival, and handed over to the Mayor of Plymouth, Mass., a Bible, a Bible so big that it would have cost him nearly £10 in excess air baggage charges had not sympathetic officials accepted it as "reading material." A Bible with a history. For it belonged to his ancestor James Hawker, who used it for the farewell service in the Mayflower on that memorable day in 1620. Another ancestor, Colonel John Hawker, appointed first American Consul to the United Kingdom in 1790, made his oath of office on the same pages.

"After the thanksgiving Gospel on the ship's arrival has been read from it," Captain Farr told me, "it goes to Mr. Henry Hornblower II, president of the Plymouth Foundation, for exhibition."

Captain Farr had another memento in his baggage—a small flask of old-fashioned sloe gin. James Hawker put some of this cordial in the Mayflower for the toast in the New World, a toast that was shared with Massasoit, Great Chief of the Massachusetts Indians, on Watson's Hill. The 400-year-old recipe is still in the family and Captain Farr's

gin was destined to be the toast in Commander Villiers's cabin as anchor was weighed.

## Israel's Future

LONDON, as the great Bagdad of the West, never lacks novelty. Thus at a public dinner when the Medical and Dental Group of the British Technion Committee asked for donations to build up technical development in Israel, the chairman was able to announce that one of the first contributions was a cheque for £1,750 from an anonymous donor. This was indeed a hiding of the light. But there it was, and although there were no other cheques of such size the contributions reached an excellent total.

Israel is making great advances in this new realm of scientific development. She expects not only to have all the atomic power she needs but also to be able to supply other States in the Middle East. There was a note of confidence in the future which was most impressive, nor was the enthusiasm damped by the speeches of a Tory and a Socialist M.P.

## Gratitude

SOON after it had been announced that Tengku Abdul Rahman had invited the London girl who drove him during his stay in London to his country's independence celebrations next August, I heard of another example typical of the generosity of this Anglophile Chief Minister of Malaya.

For several years he had been trying to discover the man who first acted as his tutor when he arrived as a young undergraduate at Cambridge in the 1920s, but it was not until the Tengku appeared in Portrait Gallery last month that the man's widow, Mrs. E. D. Vigers of Madingley, was prompted to write to him.

At once he postponed his return flight to Malaya to visit her and talk over the people they had known at Cambridge thirty years before. At Madingley he also met Mrs. Vigers's daughter, Molly, whom he had remembered as an extremely small child.

A few days later she received a motor-scooter paid for by Rahman himself. It is well known that he is not a wealthy man.

## Sound and Sense

NOT long ago on this page I ventured the opinion that poets should give us the sound and let the sense look after itself. A reader from Ebury Street sends me a stimulating letter in support of that contention. Here it is:

I entirely agree with your statement. When Yeats writes: *Though I am old with wandering, Through hollow lands and hilly lands, I will find out where she has gone, And kiss her lips and take her hands; And walk among long dappled grass, And pluck till time and times are done The silver apples of the moon, The golden apples of the sun.* It is difficult to attach any exact meaning to the last four lines, yet they are the very stuff of which real poetry is made.

## People and Words

"What Britain wants are more people who can be called 'cards' and 'characters,' who will say 'We do not keep up with the Joneses!'"

—MR. JOHN MARSH, Director of the Industrial Welfare Society.

"For some reason, we in greyhound racing are shunned by royalty, although we believe we are quite respectable people!"

—LORD BRABAZON.

"Publishers are never happy. If a book sells well, they complain about income tax. If it doesn't sell they complain about bankruptcy."

—MR. JOHN STEINBECK.

"The longer I live, the less I remember of anything I have ever learned."

—THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

"I try all my new parts on cows in a field near my home—they are the nearest I can get to a typical Monday-night audience!"

—A. E. MATTHEWS.

"I sometimes think of taking up politics, but prudence dissuades me. After thirty years in the theatre a man is virtually unemployable."

—MR. ROBERT MORLEY.

"Who smiles with us is for peace; who does not smile is for war."

—MR. KENNEDY